

THE ROL OF THE JEWISH PRIESTHOOD IN THE WARS OF ANCIENT ISRAEL¹

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Abstract

Given its frequency, war was considered almost a way of living in the ancient Israel, as well as in the entire ancient society. The present study aims at highlighting the mission of Old Testament's priests in the context of armed conflicts. In such situation the main activity of the Old Testament's priests was to maintain vivid in the mind of the warriors that the Lord of Hosts is battling with them and accompanies them into war. This is illustrated mainly by the presence of the Ark of the Covenant in front of the army, carried by the Levites. Although they could not actually engage in combat, the priests used to encourage the warriors, to make sacrifices or ask for God's will. In this context, the involvement of priests is a very strong argument for the presence and mission of the Church's servants in the military units or combat scene.

Keywords: *war, mission, priest, army, holy war*

War is such a common reality in human history that its presentation overlaps with the account of warlike actions. Despite the fact that the military leaders tried to present its beneficial aspects and advantages, war was perceived as a negative act, worthy of rejection, a real scourge for humanity². This reality of war constitutes an undeniable presence in the Old Testament as well, as warlike actions are included in the list of usual relations between the peoples of the ancient East.

¹ This paper is the improved version, in English, of the study "Misiunea preoților Vechiului Testament în contextul conflictelor armate", published in Pr. Prof. Dr. Viorel Sava (coord.), *Studia Theologica Doctoralia*, Ed. Doxologia, Iași, 2019, pp. 48-58.

² Waldemar JANZEN, "War in the Old Testament", in *Mennoite Quarterly Review*, 46, 1972, p. 157.